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Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Item 1 of the provisional agenda*
Organizational matters

Report of the first regular session of 2012, 24 January 2012

I. Organizational matters

1. The first regular session of 2012 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held in New York on 24 January 2012.

2. The outgoing President of the Bureau of the Executive Board of UN-Women, U. Joy Ogwu (Nigeria), opened the session with the results of the elections for the Bureau of the Board for the year 2012.

3. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea), representing Asia-Pacific States, was elected as President of the Executive Board for the year 2012. The four Vice-Presidents elected to the Bureau are: John Alhassan Gana (Nigeria), representing African States; Ketlin Viimsalu (Estonia), representing Eastern European States; Carmen Arias (Peru), representing Latin American and Caribbean States; and Fernando Fernández Arias (Spain), representing Western European and other States.

4. In conveying her gratitude to the members of the Executive Board, as well as observer delegations, for their invaluable contribution, the outgoing President underscored the significant achievements of the Executive Board over the past year, such as the endorsement of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 (UNW/2011/9). She stated that the Board had laid the groundwork, providing essential navigational tools, which would be used to create the "scaffolding for the future" of UN-Women. The Entity, she noted, had reached "cruising altitude" and must now navigate its way effectively, using the tools the Board had provided over the past year. She also extended her gratitude to the outgoing Vice-Presidents, who had dedicated significant time and effort to the work of the Bureau. She urged Board members to continue to provide advisory support to UN-Women and to continue to encourage Member States to provide financial support for the work of the Entity, and commended the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Michelle Bachelet, for her vision and leadership.

* UNW/2012/L.1/Rev.1.

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5. The new President of the Bureau thanked the outgoing President for her leadership over the first year of the Bureau of the Executive Board. He thanked the Asia-Pacific States for nominating him and congratulated the newly elected Vice-Presidents. He also thanked Ms. Bachelet for her support and commitment to improving the lives of women worldwide and expressed his commitment to ensuring the achievement of the complex mandate of UN-Women, which combines both programmatic and normative functions and the responsibility to coordinate the work of the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The President pledged his support to UN-Women and to the head of the Entity and his commitment to building on the excellent foundations in order to promote the quest for greater operational effectiveness and efficiency.

6. The President then turned to the organizational matters of the session. Under this item, the Board approved the agenda for its first regular session of 2012 (UNW/2012/L.1/Rev.1) and its workplan, as revised.

7. The Board also approved the report of the second regular session (5-7 December 2011) (UNW/2012/2).

II. Presentation and discussion of the report on operational activities

8. In introducing the report on operational activities (UNW/2012/1), the head of UN-Women thanked the members who had served on the Bureau of the Executive Board in 2011 for their service, and congratulated the members of the Bureau for 2012 on their election. She noted that the first report on the operational activities of UN-Women outlined the work of the Entity on the ground to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The strategic plan, 2011-2013, was a guide for these operational activities.

9. The head of the Entity highlighted examples of the work of UN-Women in the year 2011, with an emphasis on partnership, expanding women's leadership, increasing women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women, strengthening women's role in peace and security, making budgets and plans work for women, "Delivering as one" and resource mobilization.

10. Women's leadership and political participation remained an urgent challenge in all regions of the world. UN-Women had supported the training of women candidates for public office in 23 countries and had been at the forefront of advancing women's political participation in Arab States with its support for women's participation in constitutional reform, elections and political transition, with programmes in Tunisia and Egypt. Through the Fund for Gender Equality, UN-Women had also begun to assist States throughout the Arab region in increasing women's political participation.

11. The head of UN-Women stated that the Entity would make a strong case for women's economic empowerment and engage partners to expand economic opportunities for women in the year 2012. By strengthening women's economic role, economic recovery could be faster and more sustainable. She noted that the elimination of discrimination against women in certain sectors had the potential to increase labour productivity up to 25 per cent in some countries. UN-Women had urged the private sector to embrace principles of women's empowerment to advance

equal opportunities and women's leadership. So far, 257 companies had committed to the principles and UN-Women is actively working to exceed its goal of 500 companies by 2015.

12. With regard to combating violence against women, UN-Women spearheaded a global initiative to provide women and girls with universal access to critical support in situations of violence and expanded the work on "Safe Cities for Women and Children", including through the recent partnerships with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

13. In 2011, UN-Women took steps to ensure women's role in peace talks, peacebuilding and recovery, by finalizing a United Nations system-wide strategic framework to increase coordination, monitoring and accountability across the United Nations system for women's participation in resolving conflict, building peace and ending sexual violence. The Secretary-General's seven-point action plan (see A/65/354-S/2010/466) had garnered additional support for women's participation in peacebuilding, with agreement across the system to allocate at least 15 per cent of budgets for post-conflict recovery to ensure women's participation, and at least 40 per cent of temporary jobs in post-conflict recovery to women.

14. Working in "Delivering as one" and in "self-starter" countries had been invaluable for UN-Women. At the country level, the Entity encourages and supports United Nations country teams to use performance indicators, gender score cards and gender audits. There has been a marked improvement in the focus on gender equality and new strategies to address country specific challenges. Eight United Nations organizations (the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) had volunteered to pilot the new accountability framework of the system-wide action plan for gender equality that would soon be submitted to the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination for approval.

15. The head of UN-Women acknowledged the chronic underfunding of programmes on gender equality and the empowerment of women. She thanked donor countries for their contributions, yet acknowledged that in 2012, UN-Women would need to further broaden the donor base for core contributions. It would also need to identify and harness new opportunities for cost-sharing to complement the core resource base, with a view to including the two trust funds managed by UN-Women (the Fund for Gender Equality and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women). UN-Women would continue to explore all opportunities to diversify its resource base, including expanding non-traditional partnerships with the private sector, foundations and national committees for UN-Women.

16. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director concluded by noting that she would place special emphasis in 2012 on advancing women's political participation and economic empowerment.

A. Interventions

17. Delegations congratulated the members of the 2012 Bureau of the UN-Women Executive Board on their election and thanked the outgoing President and outgoing Bureau members for their diligence and hard work. They also congratulated and welcomed the new President and expressed confidence in his leadership in the coming year.

18. Delegations also congratulated the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her leadership and for the progress made with respect to the operational activities of UN-Women during the Entity's first year of operation. UN-Women was commended for its strong involvement in national capacity-building, gender responsive budgeting, promoting the empowerment of women and ending violence against women.

19. Delegations noted the important role of UN-Women in the political and economic empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations in the context of the Arab Spring. In the Middle East and North Africa, as countries begin transitioning, steps must be taken to ensure respect for women's rights.

20. Speakers cited progress at the national level in the areas of gender-based budgeting, promoting gender sensitivity in the legal system, improvements in female literacy, increases in the number of female elected officials, initiatives to promote women's employment and microfinance opportunities, decreasing violence against women and promoting affordable health care.

21. A number of delegations expressed gratitude for the support of UN-Women at the country level. Tanzania acknowledged that the assistance of UN-Women had led to institutional changes. Argentina highlighted the work of UN-Women in providing support for the development of a national plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and a framework for including gender-based budgeting. While noting the contributions of UN-Women in Argentina, the delegate also called for the expansion of the UN-Women country office in Argentina.

22. Delegations expressed their desire for UN-Women to increase its presence in middle-income countries, which continue to face challenges in eradicating poverty and promoting gender equality.

23. A number of delegations noted the underfunding of UN-Women and its initiatives and called for an increase of contributions to the Entity by Member States. Increases in contributions would assist in the strengthening of the field capacity of UN-Women and its ability to achieve its operational goals.

24. In noting the underfunding of UN-Women, a number of delegations made mention of their pledged contributions. Estonia looked forward to doubling its core contribution to UN-Women. India noted its pledge of $5 million to UN-Women, of which a contribution of $2 million had been fulfilled as of December 2011. Tanzania noted that it had already fulfilled its 2011-2012 financial commitment. Kazakhstan noted that it had doubled its annual contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund to En ! Violence against Women, up to a total of $100,000.

25. One delegation noted the importance of upholding the principles of fairness, openness and the equitable geographic distribution of UN-Women staff, and taking effective measures to address the under-representation of developing countries as

well as the need to prevent a swelling in the number of policymakers in the field and at headquarters. That delegation stated that UN-Women should prioritize the enhancement of its coordination and interaction with the Commission on the Status of Women and, in operational activities, follow the principle of country ownership, increase consultation and communication with the recipient States, and avoid coupling development aid with gender or human rights indicators.

26. Speakers noted the operational challenges UN-Women faces with respect to its capacity to support programme delivery; mechanisms to ensure the success of programmes; refining the management framework; cost efficiency and sound resource management; funding; and contributing to the United Nations coordination system-wide approach, which will allow country teams to be more effective. It was also noted that UN-Women should increase its operational activities in the areas of education, poverty alleviation and health. A delegation expressed the view that the discussion on the transition from relief to development, contained in the report on operational activities, should have focused on all aspects of this debate, rather than mostly addressing the "Women, peace and security" agenda.

27. One delegation noted the need to maintain the focus on efficient operational activities and to continue to work collaboratively with other United Nations entities on an adequate cost-recovery approach. UN-Women was also encouraged to further refine its results framework and use a selected set of indicators that capture the essence of UN-Women operations.

28. UN-Women was urged by one delegation to adhere to its mandate in carrying out field operations, and to systematically report to the Executive Board on its progress in field operations as well as financial and human resources.

29. Looking to the future of UN-Women, speakers highlighted the leadership role of UN-Women on gender issues, both normatively and operationally. There was a call for UN-Women to rise to its role as the leading force behind gender equality and the empowerment of women in the international system.

30. Delegations noted the upcoming reports on the implementation of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 and on the regional architecture review, both scheduled to be presented at the annual session of the Executive Board.

B. Responses

31. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Directors of the Policy and Programme and of the Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships Bureaus responded to interventions by delegations.

32. The head of UN-Women noted that priority areas were developed in consultation with country teams as well as other entities in the United Nations system.

33. The standardization of the use of gender indicators would assist in harmonization among international development entities in the United Nations system, in the context of the mandate of UN-Women to lead more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system.

34. With regard to middle-income countries, the head of the Entity stated that UN-Women had a universal mandate and acknowledged that approximately 72 per cent of the world's poor reside in middle-income countries. There needs to be a

discussion regarding how UN-Women can best impact the lives of people in the least developed countries and in middle-income countries.

35. The Deputy Executive Director of the Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships Bureau noted that UN-Women is working to make a stronger connection between the normative and operational aspects of its work through incorporating feedback from country teams into normative processes. She also mentioned the need for donor countries to match their contributions to UN-Women to those allocated to more established funds and programmes.

36. The Deputy Executive Director of the Policy and Programme Bureau noted that there is a need to focus on resource mobilization in order to increase the operational effectiveness of UN-Women. Financial resources, along with a focused results framework, will allow UN-Women to become the lead entity for gender-related issues.

III. Adoption of decision (2012/1)

37. Following the discussions, the Executive Board adopted the following decision:

2012/1 Report on operational activities

The Executive Board,

1. Takes note of the report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the operational activities of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women;[1]

2. Decides to transmit the report to the Economic and Social Council.

38. The Executive Board also adopted the tentative workplan for its annual session of 2012 (29 May-1 June 2012), which was subsequently revised (see annex I) and the draft annual workplan of the Executive Board for 2012, which was subsequently revised (see annex II).

IV. President's concluding remarks

39. In his closing speech, the President thanked the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director for her report on the operational activities of UN-Women and thanked delegations for their contributions during the session. The President noted the challenges ahead for UN-Women and the need to work diligently to raise the financial resources that are necessary, in spite of the global economic crisis. In closing, the President noted his desire to work with Member States to enhance the delivery on the UN-Women mandate and expressed his conviction that there will be no possible future without women being meaningfully taken into account and included in all activities, in all areas and at all levels.

[1] UNW/2012/1.

V. Spotlight panel event on the theme "Women's leadership and political participation in action"

40. An informal lunchtime event on the theme "Women's leadership and political participation in action" was held on 24 January 2012. The discussion highlighted cases in North Africa, including Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia; in Kenya; and in Mexico to illustrate the efforts of UN-Women to advance women's leadership and political participation. The panel provided an opportunity for Member States to interact with UN-Women staff from the field.

41. The panellists included the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women; the UN-Women country programme coordinator for Egypt; the officer-in-charge for the Subregional Office for North Africa, in Morocco; the country programme manager for Kenya; and the regional programme director for the Subregional Office for Mexico, Central America, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

42. The head of UN-Women, in her opening remarks, noted the relevance of women's leadership and political participation in all political contexts, and the commitment and vision of UN-Women towards advancing this work.

43. Many delegations noted their appreciation of the panel discussion and were pleased to have the opportunity to interact with UN-Women staff from country and regional offices.

Annex I

Provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2012

Provisional agenda

1. Organizational matters
2. Progress in the implementation of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013
3. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters
4. Evaluation
5. Other matters

Tentative workplan

Date	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
Tuesday, 29 May	10 a.m.-11 a.m.	1	Organizational matters • Adoption of the agenda and workplan for the session • Adoption of the report of the first regular session of 2012
	11 a.m.-1 p.m.	2	Progress in the implementation of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 • Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on progress in the implementation of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013
	3 p m.-6 p.m.	2	Progress in the implementation of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 (continued)
Wednesday, 30 May	10 a.m.-1 p.m.	3	Financial, budgetary and administrative matters • Report on the regional architecture review
	3 p.m.-6 p.m.	3	Financial, budgetary and administrative matters (continued)
Thursday, 31 May	10 a.m.-1 p.m.	3	*Informal consultations on draft decisions*
	3 p.m.-4.30 p.m.	3	Financial, budgetary and administrative matters Proposed amendments to the financial regulations and rules of UN-Women
	4.30 p.m.-6 p.m.		*Informal consultations on draft decisions*

Date	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
Friday, 1 June	10 a.m.-1 p.m.	4	Evaluation • Annual report on the evaluation functions of UN-Women
	3 p.m.-4.30 p.m.	5	Other matters • Adoption of draft decisions
	4.30 p.m.-6 p.m.	1	Organizational matters • Adoption of the provisional agenda and tentative workplan for the second regular session of 2012

Annex II

Draft annual workplan of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for 2012

In accordance with the rules of procedure of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNW/2011/6), the Executive Board adopts its annual workplan at its first regular session of every year. Discussion on the workplan starts no later than at the last session of the Executive Board for the previous year. The draft annual workplan for 2012 is being presented to the Executive Board for discussion at its second regular session of 2011. It will be submitted to the Board for adoption at the first regular session of 2012, subject to revisions as appropriate during the year.

First regular session: 24 January 2012

1. Organizational matters
   - Election of the Bureau of the Executive Board for 2012
   - Adoption of the agenda and workplan for the session
   - Adoption of the report of the second regular session of 2011
   - Adoption of the annual workplan of the Executive Board for 2012
2. Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the operational activities of UN-Women
   - Statement by the head of the Entity
3. Other matters
   - Adoption of pending decisions
   - Adoption of the provisional agenda and tentative workplan for the annual session of 2012

Annual session: 29 May to 1 June 2012

1. Organizational matters
   - Adoption of the agenda and workplan for the session
2. Annual progress report on the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 (Executive Board decision 2011/3)
   - Statement by the head of the Entity
3. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters
   - Report on the regional architecture review

- Proposed amendments to the financial regulations and rules of UN-Women

4. Evaluation

- Annual report on the evaluation function of UN-Women

5. Other matters

- Adoption of pending decisions
- Adoption of the provisional agenda and tentative workplan for the second regular session of 2012

Second regular session: 5 to 7 September 2012

1. Organizational matters

- Adoption of the agenda and workplan for the session
- Draft annual workplan for 2013

2. Update on the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013

- Statement by the head of the Entity

3. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters

- Cost-recovery policy for UN-Women (Executive Board decision 2011/5)
- Supplementary proposals to the institutional budget estimates for UN-Women for the biennium 2012-2013 based on the regional architecture review (Executive Board decision 2011/5)
- Change management budget report
- Financial statement of UN-Women for 2011
- Audit of financial statements for 2011

4. Other matters

- Adoption of pending decisions
- Adoption of the provisional agenda and tentative workplan for the first regular session of 2013